

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



24 September 2007

Mrs D Sims  
The Headteacher  
Our Lady and St Benedict Catholic Primary School  
Abbey Lane  
Abbey Hulton  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST2 8AU

Dear Mrs Sims

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 September 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Discussions with some children, the deputy headteacher and the local authority (LA) representative were also very helpful in evaluating the progress the school has made.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection 30 November and 1 December 2006, the school was asked to improve: the opportunities given for children to improve their writing; the use of assessment to raise standards in mathematics and science; the monitoring of teaching and the curriculum; and, the way targets are used to help children understand what they need to do to improve.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that, at this time, the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

Since the last inspection the school has had a number of changes in staffing. As well as staff leaving and new staff being appointed, some staff have moved to teach different year groups. Over the last twelve months some children have been taught by a number of different teachers and children themselves comment that this has been disruptive to their learning. Although the staffing situation is much more stable now, there are still two new teacher appointments to be made to take up post in January 2008.

The school has been successful in improving the opportunities that children have to develop their writing skills. This has been across a number of subjects. However,

although this improvement is evident in children's work, there has been no direct impact on raising standards in writing.

The results of the Year 2 assessment tasks given in the summer were mixed. Standards in mathematics fell compared to the previous year. In reading there was an increase in the number of children who reached the expected Level 2 but none reached the higher Level 3, compared to the previous Year 2 group where a quarter of the children did so. In writing there was a similar picture, with a small increase in the proportion of children reaching Level 2 but a drop in those achieving Level 3. Tests taken by Year 6 children in the summer were disappointing. Standards fell in English, mathematics and science. Although the school can identify some of the reasons for standards falling at the end of Year 6, the fact remains that the progress these children made was inadequate.

The amount of progress children make across the school is now being measured in English and mathematics in more detail. Tests taken at the end of the summer term show that in Years 1 to 6 a significant number of children made inadequate progress. The situation is worse in mathematics, where well over half failed to make the progress expected. In contrast, progress in reading was better, indicating that the intensive reading support programme is beginning to improve standards. In the Foundation Stage, assessment suggests that progress is better and at least satisfactory. Marking in some books is good and helps children understand what they need to improve, especially when comments are highlighted with fluorescent green. As one child said, 'That's green for growth.' Although some marking is having a positive effect, the overall level of inadequate achievement, especially in mathematics, indicates that assessment in general is not yet effectively raising standards.

The school has put in place a timetable of monitoring to check the quality of teaching and learning. This key area for improvement, identified at the last inspection, highlighted the need for this monitoring to be robust so as to deal with weaknesses. The impact of this work on the quality of teaching has not been very effective. Far too much satisfactory teaching persists, and there is not enough good teaching to enable children to make up lost ground. There are some signs that satisfactory lessons have good parts, but the school's monitoring of lessons points to this only recently happening. Further evidence to support this is difficult to see in children's work books. However, in one Year 6 science lesson seen during the visit, children were engaged in their learning and both teacher and teaching assistant were able to ask good questions. In relation to monitoring the curriculum there have been regular checks on curriculum plans and helpful comments have identified where weaknesses occur.

The school has worked hard to improve the way targets are given to children in English and mathematics. Older children talk confidently about these and can explain the way that teachers mark their work. These targets are helping the oldest children to focus on what they need to improve. Some of the younger children are also aware of targets but, at the time of the visit when the new school term had just started,

they were not familiar with how much they had already done to reach their targets. In one Year 2 lesson observed the teacher effectively reminded children of how their target in mathematics linked to the work they were doing.

The LA recognises that virtually none of the success criteria identified to measure the effectiveness of their support has been met. The support given to the school has recently been reviewed and there is an acknowledgement from the LA that the rate of progress the school has made has not been adequate.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have had to tackle staffing problems since the last inspection. Although work has started on all four key areas of improvement the impact of this work has failed to significantly raise the quality of teaching and standards. As a result the school has been right to judge achievement and standards as inadequate. To further focus on improvement the school has recently begun to draw up specific year group action plans which highlight the actions to improve standards and to deal with any barriers to learning, for example children's attitudes and behaviour. Governors now receive regular updates on the progress the school is making, which is helping them to hold the school to account and redress the weakness found at the last inspection. Although the information they receive is helpful, more could be done to ensure that any progress made is quantified in order for governors to track improvements over time.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Cook".

Andrew Cook  
Her Majesty's Inspector